

THE PERFECT PLAN OF SALVATION.

An Address Delivered in the Tabernacle,
Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Au-
gust 24, 1902, by

ELDER BEN E. RICH.

In Tune with the Holy Spirit—Posi-
tion of the Latter-day Saints—But
One Gospel Plan—How the Truth
May be Learned—Original Church
Organization—Fundamental Prin-
ciples of the Gospel—The Priest-
hood Restored—Falling Away
Foretold—Complete Restoration
of the Gospel.

Our Father in heaven sent His only Begotten Son in the meridian of time to lay before the children of men a perfect plan of salvation. That plan was the power of God unto salvation. And when He left His disciples He promised them that they should be endowed with power from on high. He commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received this power. He said that the Comforter, which should come unto them from the Father, should partake of things from God and reveal the same unto them, and show them what they should lay before the people—not only things present, but things past, and things to come. During the ministry of our Savior upon the earth He was very particular in sending His apostles out to preach, and they should be led and directed by the Spirit of the Lord. It is the duty of every person who stands before a congregation of people to speak in the name of the Messiah, to consider himself an instrument in the hands of God. He must not be a machine. He must store his mind with useful information, and then trust to this Comforter to reveal unto him such things as may be wisdom to lay before the people. You have attended this service and heard beautiful music coming from the choir and from this grand organ. You have observed perhaps that the instrument is in tune, and therefore the organist has been successful in bringing sweet music from it. The Spirit of God is the musician, and if we place ourselves in tune and become instruments in the hands of God, then the Lord will bring forth those things that will be beneficial unto us; but unless we lean upon the Lord, and try to store our minds with useful information, and then trust to this Comforter to reveal unto him such things as may be wisdom to lay before the people, God answers the prayers of His children, and realizing that this time that I am but an instrument in the hands of God, I earnestly ask for your faith and prayers, that God may send to me that Comforter, which will partake of things from the Father and cause me to say those things that will be pleasing unto Him.

POSITION OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

I realize the position that we occupy before the people of the world and the opinion that they have of us. And when they reach the land of Zion they are many times surprised to find that the Latter-day Saints really believe in Jesus Christ, and that they are not a sect, but that they believe in Jesus Christ as King James' translation of the Holy Scriptures—the Bible found in the pulpits of all the Protestant churches of the world. The Bible the Latter-day Saints have used from the organization of the Church, and the only one they have. Thousands of people have been sent out into the world carrying with them this Bible, and calling upon mankind to repent of their sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We occupy the same position today that that little band of Nazarenes occupied in the meridian of time when they stood face to face with the Jews who pretended to believe in the law and the prophets, which contained the revelations from God concerning the coming of their Savior. The Jews of men, because they came with a revelation from God. The position occupied by the Latter-day Saints today before the Christian nations, who not only have the record of the ancient prophets but also the record of the acts of the Apostles and the words of Jesus Christ, is similar to that occupied by our brethren who lived 1,900 years ago. The Latter-day Saints claim that the Gospel of Christ as revealed and taught by Him, is the plan of salvation; that the disciples when they said "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," means that Jesus of Nazareth did not come to the earth to lay many plans of salvation before the people, but one plan, and that one plan came from God, who is unchangeable, everlasting, and no respecter of persons. The Latter-day Saints are contending for the faith that was once delivered to the Saints, which consisted of that one perfect law that came from God, our Eternal Father, through the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, who laid before us that plan of salvation which was and which is the power of God unto salvation.

BUT ONE GOSPEL PLAN.

The Apostle Paul, upon one occasion, found that there were some of the branches of the Church who were endeavoring to introduce changes into that one plan, and he wrote a letter to the Galatians of the Church, called the Galatians, in which he said he marvelled that some were so soon shaken, and that there were some who would pervert the Gospel of Christ, and then he used those words to them, to show that there must be no change from the one plan; "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Then, as though he wished to rivet that warning upon their minds, he repeated it with more force, saying, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." I often think of these words when it is my privilege to stand before a congregation and speak upon the plan of salvation introduced by Jesus. It causes me to realize the responsibility resting upon my shoulders. I am warned to teach the Gospel that was taught by Christ and His disciples—the one faith, containing the plan of salvation, and I am reminded by the words of the Apostle Paul, always ringing in my ears, that if I attempt to pervert the Gospel of Christ, or introduce a new system, the curse of God will rest upon me. Sometimes I wonder, if the Apostle Paul was surprised in that early day at finding a few in one of the branches of the Church who were attempting to pervert the Gospel, what would be his surprise today if he should come upon the earth, and instead of finding one Lord, one faith, one baptism, a plan of salvation laid before Christendom, he would find hundreds of organizations, hundreds of different plans of salvation, different kinds of baptisms, and many kinds of authority? I wonder if he would open the book and read to them the passage I have quoted; and would he be reminded that Jesus was sent by the Father to lay before them the only plan, and that there must be no change from that system planted upon the earth by the Son of God when He was dwelling in the flesh?

HOW THE TRUTH MAY BE LEARNED.

The Latter-day Saints believe in that plain, simple plan of salvation taught

by our Savior, and the Elders who go into the world to teach it to mankind. But the trouble we meet with is that some people draw their inspiration concerning us from those who are not of our faith, and those who have not kindly feelings dwelling in their hearts toward us. If there are those in the congregation today who are not of our faith, and who have come to find out concerning the faith of the Latter-day Saints, instead of listening to the words of the chief priests and the enemies of the early Christians, there would not have been so many to cry "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Where else should you go to gain information concerning our faith? It would not be right for you to go to a Methodist minister or a Catholic priest. They are liable not to understand our faith, and not to represent it as we are able to represent it ourselves. If you should desire to learn the truth concerning the Catholic church, it would be right and proper for you to go to a Catholic priest, who could give you a better idea of what they believe in than you could glean from their enemies. The same with all other faiths. Hear both sides of a question before you judge. He who judgeth before he hears is not wise. Preach all things, and hold fast that which is good, is the advice that is given in the Bible.

FOUNDATION OF REVELATION.

We believe that the faith of Christ is built upon the rock of revelation from God. Communication from heaven, and the children of men being led by revelation from God, is the very basis of that plan of salvation which was taught by the Only Begotten of the Father. You remember when He sent His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man am?" They named various individuals. "But whom sayest thou, Simon Barjona?" He asked. The answer came, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock—I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The Apostle Peter knew that He was Jesus, the Son of God; that power of the Holy Ghost, that parable of the kingdom of God, that revealed the same to the children of men; this foundation of revelation from God—upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. God always blessed His servants so long as they kept that "straight and narrow path," and did not attempt to change the plan of salvation. While they sought not to introduce any changes in that eternal plan laid down by Jesus, they enjoyed revelation from God, and the Holy Ghost continued always to partake of things from the Father and show the children of men things past, present and to come. Now, my friends, if we have been taught for hundreds of years that the heavens were as brass above the heads of the children of men; that revelation was revealed by the teachers of the law; but that it is no longer needed; and the foundation of salvation introduced by Christ—revelation—has been repudiated by the teachers of the law; throughout the length and breadth of the earth.

ORIGINAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

Then, again, Jesus placed within the organization of that Church certain officers, and the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, reminded them of this. He told them that God had placed Apostles and Prophets in the Church. What is a prophet? A prophet is one who communes with God, the Eternal Father, and who knows the mind and will of the Father, and to whom God reveals Himself. Christ placed apostles and prophets in the Church; modern Christians say only the word of the Church, and then they were to be done away with, because no longer needed; but mark the words of the Apostle. He said that Christ placed these officers in the Church "for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith." That does not seem to indicate that they were necessary only in the beginning; it rather bears

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me out in the statement that God placed them there to remain until all mankind should come to a unity of the faith, that, as the Apostle further says, "We henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Now, if God placed them in the Church for the work of the ministry, who has the right to say they are not needed so long as there is a necessity for the work of the ministry? If He placed them there till we all come to a unity of the faith, who has a right to say they can be dispensed with so long as there is missionary work to be done upon the earth? Therefore, Latter-day Saints claim, not only that God has revealed anew the faith, but that He has given the power and the authority of that faith, by placing Apostles and Prophets in the Church, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, to remain until we all come to a unity of the faith, being fed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that comes from the Father, and standing upon that rock of revelation that Christ said He would build His Church upon.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.

Now, there were certain principles placed in the Church anciently, and certain ordinances which people had to obey in order to enter into the Church of Christ. Christ taught His disciples, and the disciples went forth and taught the people, that they should have faith in the Lord Jesus, that they should repent of their sins, that they should be baptized in water for the remission of their sins—not baptized as an outward sign of an inward grace, but baptized for the remission of sins—and that after baptism, they should receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. By receiving these ordinances of the Gospel they became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who cry Lord, Lord, will be saved in the kingdom of heaven; but those who do the will of the Father, Peter said, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ and he should be saved, but not to you suppose that Peter said something to him concerning baptism, for the record tells us that he took him out that same hour of the night and baptized him. He would not have done that unless he had explained to the other something about the ordinance of baptism.

These four principles—faith, repentance, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost—were the fundamental principles which constituted the Church of Christ, those who were numbered among those who would cry Lord, Lord, but who would not do the will of the Father in heaven. You remember that the disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost had been waiting for that Comforter which Christ promised them, and when it did come they began to preach the Gospel and lay the plan of salvation before mankind; and when the people were pricked in their hearts and wanted to know what they should do, Peter, the chief Apostle, stood forth from his brethren and explained to them these fundamental principles that I have mentioned. He said that they had faith, and their hearts, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" That is a question that is asked today; and how is it answered? A multitude of different answers are given to that same question. One set will answer one way, another will answer it another way; some will plan to have this form of baptism, and some will have that; and yet the words of the Apostle Peter have come down through the ages, saying to those who believed, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." There is the plan—the eternal plan, come from God through the Holy Spirit, which rested upon the disciples when the Apostle Peter answered the great question, "What shall we do to be saved?" Repentance, baptism for the remission of sins follows; and the gift of the Holy Ghost follows. That was the Gospel taught by Paul to the Gentiles, and that is the Gospel taught by him to the Jews. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Following this line for a moment, you remember that Philip was sent down to Samaria to preach the Gospel, and the word came up to Jerusalem that all Samaria had received the word of God, and that both men and women had been baptized by this missionary. When the Apostles at Jerusalem heard this, they sent down Peter and John, in order that the plan made by Peter upon the day of Pentecost should be fulfilled, because, mind you, when Peter laid these principles before the people at Jerusalem he told them that the promise was unto them, and unto their children, "even as many as shall be baptized shall be saved." Therefore, the promise was unto the people of Samaria, that after they had been baptized they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles went down for that purpose. They should have said, "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." There was a man there, who heard of this, and he was in the habit of deceiving people, and when he saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given to baptized believers, he offered the Apostles money for the same power, "that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." But Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Does not the record bear me out in saying that the gift of the Holy Ghost comes through the laying on of the hands of those who have the power and the right to act in the name of God? It was demonstrated then in the land of Samaria. Money cannot buy it. No man, says the Apostle, is to take this power unto himself, except he be called of God as Aaron was.

THE PRIESTHOOD RESTORED.

The Latter-day Saints make the claim that God has restored the Priesthood. Once more man is endowed with power from on high. Once more Apostles and Prophets stand upon the earth, once more the Gospel is being preached just as it was preached by the commandment of Jesus, before the priests began to teach for hire, before pretending prophets began to divine for money, just as it was laid before the people when Jesus sent His disciples out without purse and scrip, and said to them, "Freely ye have received; freely give," with the same spirit as moved upon the Apostle Paul when he said,

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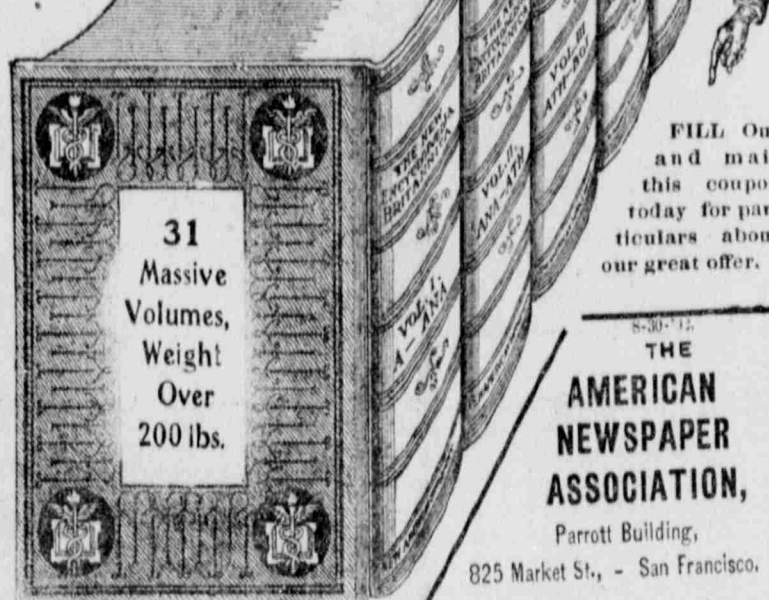
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FALLING AWAY FORETOLD.

The Apostles whose acts are recorded in this Bible, also state that a falling away from that plan would take place. They intimate that an apostasy would occur. Look over Christendom today, and you will not find the same plan, and so many changes have been introduced by man that we are forced to conclude that the Gospel of Christ has been perverted.

COMPLETE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The record also states that in the last days the God of Heaven would establish a Kingdom upon the earth. Let us ask you, Would it be different to that Kingdom He sent His only Begotten Son to establish? Would God prove a changeable being? Would He introduce another system than the perfect plan He sent His Son to establish? No! He is the same God, and of course He would introduce the same plan. To show you that we are not mistaken, let us have a similar work upon the earth before He should come again. He said, concerning the time of His second coming, "I will be in the days of Noah." He should be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. How was it in the days of Noah? God raised up a prophet. He sent a warning message to the people through the voice of inspiration. He clothed one of His children with power and authority to speak in His name. The power of God was exercised through man upon the earth. Prophets stood upon the earth then, and if Christ's words are to be fulfilled, prophets will stand upon the earth in the day of His second coming. The heavens and the earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of Christ's sayings will fail to the ground unfulfilled.

Now, my brothers and sisters, I bear witness unto you that God has revealed His mind and will in the age in which we live, that He has clothed men with power and authority; that He has once more built His plan of salvation upon the basis of revelation from God; that He has endowed men with that authority, the same as taught in the meridian of time; that the gifts of the Spirit are within the reach of mankind; that the organization of the Church is the same; that the same plan is here with us, that Christ established upon the earth, and that we must obey that plan. Our examination in His celestial kingdom; for the time will come when this earth will be cleansed and purified, when it will become like unto a sea of glass, when it will become the celestial kingdom of God, and those who keep the commandments of Christ will be called Saints of the Most High God. Then will be fulfilled the great promise wherein it is said that the earth and the fulness thereof will be given to the Saints of the Most High God, and they will possess it forever and forever. Amen.

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